

Sermon

THE

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

OF THE

Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge,

DELIVERED BY THE

LORD BISHOP OF BRISTOL,

AT A

SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY,

JUNE XIII. M.DCCC.XXIII.

TO THE

LORD BISHOP OF CALCUTTA,

PREVIOUSLY TO

HIS DEPARTURE FOR INDIA :

TOGETHER WITH

HIS LORDSHIP'S REPLY.

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1823.

At a Special General Meeting of the SOCIETY
FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE,
held at their House in Bartlett's-Buildings,
13 June, 1823, agreeably to public notice :

PRESENT,

His Grace CHARLES, Lord Archbishop of CANTERBURY,
President,

His Grace WILLIAM, Lord Archbishop of DUBLIN,

The Right Hon. and Right Rev. WILLIAM, Lord Bishop of
LONDON,

The Right Rev. THOMAS, Lord Bishop of ST. DAVID's,

The Right Rev. GEORGE-HENRY, Lord Bishop of CHESTER,

The Right Rev. WILLIAM, Lord Bishop of LLANDAFF,

The Right Rev. JOHN, Lord Bishop of BRISTOL,

The Right Rev. REGINALD, Lord Bishop of CALCUTTA,

The Right Honourable Lord KENYON,

The Right Honourable Lord LILFORD,

The Very Reverend the Dean of CARLISLE,

Sir THOMAS DYKE ACLAND, Bart.

Sir R. H. INGLIS, Bart.

The Venerable the Archdeacon of LONDON,

The Venerable the Archdeacon of ST. ALBAN's,

The Venerable the Archdeacon of COLCHESTER,

The Venerable the Archdeacon of STAFFORD,

The Venerable the Archdeacon of CLEVELAND,

The Venerable the Archdeacon of NORTHAMPTON,

The Hon. & Rev. Master of MAGDALEN COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,
and a large assemblage of MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY,

HIS GRACE THE PRESIDENT, in the Chair :

The following VALEDICTORY ADDRESS to the Right Reverend Father in God REGINALD, Lord Bishop of Calcutta, previous to his departure for India, was delivered, on the behalf of the SOCIETY, by the Right Reverend Father in God JOHN, Lord Bishop of Bristol.

MY LORD BISHOP OF CALCUTTA,

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YOUR preparations for the arduous voyage, which you are about to undertake, being now so far advanced towards their completion as to preclude the expectation that you will again, at least for a long series of years, be enabled to attend the Meetings of this SOCIETY, it has been resolved, and all must admit the propriety and expediency of the resolution, that a Valedictory Address should be delivered to your Lordship on the present occasion. The highly responsible and honourable situation, which you have been recently appointed to fill, is intimately connected with objects, to which the attention of the SOCIETY has for more than a century been directed. They would, therefore, subject themselves to a charge—of all others most abhorrent from their real character and feelings—a charge of indifference and inattention to the spiritual welfare of the inhabitants of Hindostan, did they not seize the opportunity, before your departure for those distant regions, of publicly expressing the deep, the intense interest, which they take in the success of your future labours.

But while I acknowledge the peculiar propriety of the resolution, I must be permitted to state my unfeigned regret that its execution has not been entrusted to abler hands. When it was proposed to me to undertake the office of delivering the present Address, I was not insensible to the difficulty of the task, in which I was about to engage. Every approach, which I have since made to the subject, has confirmed me in the conviction of my inability to do it justice—to produce any thing which should not be alike unworthy of your Lordship's distinguished reputation, and of the reasonable expectation of the Audience by which I am surrounded.

Happily, however, for me it is not requisite that I should enter upon the various important and interesting topics, which the occasion unavoidably suggests. In contemplating your elevation to the Episcopal Office, it is impossible to separate that event from the influence, which it must necessarily have upon the spiritual interests of the subjects of our Indian empire; of an empire scarcely inferior in extent to that of Rome in the plenitude of her power, and containing millions of our fellow-creatures who are yet strangers to the saving truths of the Gospel. How grand, how overwhelming a subject is here presented to the contemplation! A subject, in which the most exalted intellect may find a fit opportunity for the display of all its powers; but from which ordinary minds must shrink oppressed by the humiliating consciousness of their own insufficiency! Great, therefore, is the relief which I have derived from the

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reflection, that the design of the present Address neither requires, nor even permits me to expatiate in this ample field. It would be no less presumptuous in me, than foreign from the intention of the SOCIETY, were I to occupy your time and that of this Meeting in detailing my own opinions respecting the most effectual mode of communicating the blessings of Christianity to the nations of Hindostan, or in offering your Lordship my advice respecting the course, which it is expedient for you to pursue in discharging the duties of your high station. My province is simply to express to you the feelings, with which the SOCIETY regard your appointment to the superintendence of the Indian Diocese, and to bespeak your protection and support for the efforts which they have long made, and, with the blessing of Providence, shall never cease to make, to diffuse the knowledge of the Gospel throughout that vast Continent.

Yet, I trust, that you, my Right Reverend Brother, and that the rest of this respectable Assembly will not charge me with improperly digressing from the immediate business of the day, if I briefly advert to the change, which has been effected in the prospects of the SOCIETY, since a similar Address was delivered in this place. Strongly as the SOCIETY were impressed with the conviction that the formation of a Church Establishment afforded the only secure mode of communicating the blessings of Christianity to our Eastern Empire—firm and deeply-rooted as was their confidence

in the zeal, the discretion, the ability of *him* to whom the government of that Establishment was to be committed—they were, still, too sensible how short-sighted are the views of man, and how frail the nature of all his expectations, not to feel some anxiety and apprehension respecting the success of the newly-adopted measures.

Nine years have now elapsed since your lamented Predecessor entered upon the discharge of his Episcopal functions; and that, which then could only afford a subject for conjecture and for hope, has become a matter of retrospect and of certainty. All the accounts, which have reached the SOCIETY, concur in stating, that the new measures have been attended with more complete success than from the shortness of time, during which they have been in operation, the most sanguine could have ventured to anticipate. Many of the impediments, which directly, or indirectly retarded the reception of the Gospel, have been removed. The establishment of a visible Church has opened an asylum to the convert from the taunts and injuries of the professors of his former faith. The progressive improvement effected in the lives and conversation of the European settlers has deprived the natives of one of their most powerful arguments against the truth of Christianity. They no longer look upon us as mere conquerors, greedy only of wealth and of dominion; but as a virtuous and religious people, not less superior to them in moral goodness

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than in civilization and manners—in justice and benevolence than in arts and arms. Their attachment to their caste, which seemed to present the most formidable obstacle to their conversion, has been overcome. The mists, which enveloped their understandings, are fast dissolving before the irradiating influence of Sacred Truth. The superstitious dread, with which they regarded their deities, is giving place to juster conceptions of the Divine Nature; and the priests of the idol of Juggernaut are compelled to bewail the decreasing numbers and diminished zeal of his votaries.

What a variety of emotions is the cheering prospect, which has at length opened upon us, calculated to excite! What gratitude to Almighty God for the blessing, which He has been pleased to bestow upon the labours of the infant Church! What reverence for the memory of the distinguished Prelate, whose wisdom and piety have, under the direction of Providence, conducted those labours to so successful an issue! How powerful an encouragement does it hold out, how strict an obligation does it impose, stedfastly to persevere in the prosecution of those holy designs, till the triumph over the powers of darkness in our Indian empire shall be complete, and no other vestige of the ancient idolatry shall remain than the deserted temples of the divinities who were its objects. Nothing now appears to be wanting but that the number of labourers should bear a due proportion to the abundance of the

harvest which is spread before them; and our *Valedictory Address.* confidence in the enlightened piety of our Rulers forbids the supposition, that this want will long remain unsupplied. But, I must no longer detain you from the immediate business of the day.

MY LORD, the SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE desire to offer to your Lordship their sincere congratulations upon your elevation to the Episcopal See of Calcutta.

They derive from your appointment to this high office the certain assurance, that all the advantages, which they have anticipated from the formation of a Church Establishment in India, will be realized; and that the various plans for the diffusion of true Religion amongst its inhabitants, which have been so wisely laid and so auspiciously commenced by your lamented Predecessor, will, under your superintendence and control, advance with a steady and uninterrupted progress. They ground this assurance upon the rare union of intellectual and moral qualities which combine to form your character. They ground it upon the steadfastness of purpose, with which, from the period of your admission into the ministry, you have exclusively dedicated your time and talents to the peculiar studies of your sacred profession; abandoning that human learning, in which you had already shewn that you were capable of attaining the highest excellence, and renouncing the certain prospect of literary fame. But above all, they ground this assurance upon the signal

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proof of self-devotion, which you have given by your acceptance of the Episcopal office. With respect to any other individual, who had been placed at the head of the Church Establishment in India, a suspicion might have been entertained that some worldly desire, some feeling of ambition mingled itself with the motives by which he was actuated. But in your case such a suspicion would be destitute even of the semblance of truth. Every enjoyment, which a well-regulated mind can derive from the possession of wealth, was placed within your reach. Every avenue to professional distinction and dignity, if they had been the objects of your solicitude, lay open before you. What then was the motive which could incline you to quit your native land? To exchange the delights of home for a tedious voyage to distant regions? To separate yourself from the friends with whom you had conversed from your earliest years? What, but an ardent wish to become the instrument of good to others? An holy zeal in your Master's service? A firm persuasion that it was your bounden duty to submit yourself unreservedly to His disposal—to shrink from no labour which He might impose—to count no sacrifice hard which He might require?

Of the benefits, which will arise to the Indian Church from a spirit of self-devotion so pure and so disinterested the SOCIETY feel that it is impossible to form an exaggerated estimate. Nor has this act of self-devotion been the result of sudden impulse: it has been performed after

serious reflection, and with an accurate know-
 ledge of the difficulties by which your path will
 be obstructed. You have not engaged in this
 holy warfare without previously counting the
 cost. So deeply were you impressed with the
 responsibility, which must attach to the Epis-
 copal office in India, that you hesitated to
 accept it. With that diffidence, which is the
 surest characteristic of great talents and great
 virtues, you doubted your own sufficiency.
 But upon maturer deliberation you felt, that a
 call was made upon you: a call—to disobey
 which would argue a culpable distrust of the
 protection of Him who made it. You assured
 yourself that the requisite strength would be
 supplied by the same Almighty Power, which
 imposed the burthen. Amongst the circum-
 stances which have attended your recent ap-
 pointment, the SOCIETY dwell upon this with
 peculiar satisfaction; inasmuch as it forms a
 striking feature of resemblance between your
 Lordship and your lamented Predecessor; who
 like you originally felt, and like you subse-
 quently overcame a reluctance to undertake
 the administration of the Indian Diocese.

Before that accomplished Prelate quitted his
 native shores, which he was, alas! destined never
 to revisit, this SOCIETY in a Valedictory Address
 entreated him to honour with his countenance
 and protection their exertions for the propaga-
 tion and maintenance of the Christian Religion
 in the East. They stated their exertions to
 consist in sending out Missionaries; in pro-

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curing translations into the dialects of Hindostan of the Scriptures and the Liturgy of our Church, and distributing them throughout the country; and in encouraging the erection of Schools for the instruction of Children as well of Europeans as of Natives. They further invited his attention to the formation of Institutions in imitation of the Diocesan and District Committees, which had about that period been established in different parts of England and Wales.

In the designs recommended to his notice by the SOCIETY your lamented Predecessor was pleased to promise his cordial co-operation. Under his fostering care Committees were formed in the three Presidencies and in Ceylon, from the labours of which the most beneficial results have arisen. The limits, which the SOCIETY must prescribe to themselves in the present Address, will not allow them to enter into a minute detail of their results. Yet they cannot deny themselves the gratification of particularly referring to the re-establishment of the Vepery Mission Press through the interposition of the Madras Committee; a measure fraught with the most important benefits to the cause of the Gospel, since it supplies the means of diffusing through the whole of Southern India the word of knowledge and of life.

The same countenance, with which your Predecessor honoured their past labours, the SOCIETY now entreat your Lordship to bestow upon their future exertions. The nature of the objects to

which those exertions are directed will, we are assured, of itself constitute, in your estimation, a sufficient title to your support. Yet we cannot but indulge the hope, that you will be induced to regard them with an eye of especial favour by the consideration, that they proceed from the SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE. Though you have been precluded by the distance of your residence from the Metropolis, and by more pressing avocations, from attending the meetings and taking an active part in the business of the SOCIETY, still ample proofs have not been wanting of your friendly disposition towards them. Your name has long been enrolled in the list of their Members; and they feel both pleasure and gratitude, when they reflect that you condescended to close your ministerial labours in this country by a discourse delivered at their request, and, if they may be allowed to use the expression, in their service.

It now only remains to assure your Lordship, if such an assurance is indeed necessary, that in quitting your native land you bear with you the esteem and the regret of the SOCIETY. Though removed to a distant quarter of the globe, you will still be present to our thoughts. Every event, which befalls you, will be to us a subject of the liveliest interest: and with our prayers for the success of your public labours we shall mingle our petitions for your personal safety and welfare; humbly beseeching the Giver of all good gifts, that He will be pleased to

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shower his choicest earthly blessings on your head, till He shall at length call you, in the fulness of age and honour, to receive that eternal reward, which He has reserved in his heavenly kingdom for those who are the instruments of “turning many unto righteousness.”

To this Address the Lord Bishop of Calcutta made the following Reply :

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MAY IT PLEASE YOUR GRACE AND MY LORDS, PARTICULARLY MY LORD BISHOP OF BRISTOL.

IT may be easily supposed that the present is to me a very awful moment—both when I consider the persons in whose presence I stand; the occasion on which we have been called together; the charge which I have just received; and the SOCIETY on whose part those admirable and affectionate counsels have been addressed to me. I cannot recollect without very solemn and mingled feelings, of gratitude for the trust which has been reposed in me, and of alarm for the responsibility which I have incurred, how much I have been honoured by the kindness and confidence of the SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE, and the remarkable and most honourable interest which this SOCIETY has always evinced in the welfare of the Indian Church. I cannot forget, that it was this SOCIETY, which administered to the wants, and directed the energies of the first Protestant Missionaries

to Hindostan; that under its auspices at a later period Swartz, and Gerickè, and Kollhoff went forth to sow the seeds of light and happiness in that benighted country; and that still more recently within these sacred walls (for *sacred* I will venture to call them, when I consider the purposes to which they are devoted, and the prayers by which they are hallowed) Bishop Middleton bade adieu to that country which he loved, and to that Church of which he was one of the brightest ornaments. With such examples of learning and holiness around me, with such models of Christian zeal before me, I may well be acquitted of assumed humility, when I profess a deep and painful sense of my own insufficiency; and feel, that where so much has been done, and where so much remains to do, far greater energies and talents than mine will be necessary either to fulfil the reasonable expectations of the Christian world, or to avoid falling short—far short—of the achievements of my admirable Predecessor.

With such difficulties, and under such a responsibility my hope must be, and is in the counsels and countenance of your Grace, and of the other distinguished Rulers of the English Church whom I see around me; and it is therefore, that I could almost feel disposed to lament as a deficiency in the eloquent and pathetic Address of the Right Reverend Prelate, to whose kind notice of me I am so deeply indebted, that he has professedly waved all detailed explanation of his ideas respecting that

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line of conduct, which, in my situation, is most likely to conduce to, and accelerate the triumph of the Gospel among the Heathen. I regret this the more, since, in a recent admirable Sermon by the same distinguished person, he has shewn us how remarkably he is qualified to offer counsels of such a nature. Most gladly, I am convinced, we should all—and most gladly above all should *I*—have become his scholar in the art of feeding the flock of Christ, and teaching and persuading the things which belong to the kingdom of God. But, though his modesty has withheld him from the task, I will still hope to profit by his assistance in private for the execution of that awful and overpowering enterprize, which, (if I know my own heart) I can truly say, I undertake not in my own strength, but in an humble reliance on the prayers and counsels of the good and the wise, and on *that* assistance, above all, which, whosoever seeks it faithfully, shall never fail of receiving.

Nor, my Lord Archbishop, will I seek to dissemble my conviction, that, slow as the growth of truth must be in a soil so strange and hitherto so spiritually barren, distant as the period may be when any very considerable proportion of the natives of India shall lift up their hands to the Lord of Hosts, yet, in the degree of progress which has been made, enough of promise is given to remove all despondency as to the eventual issue of our labours. When we recollect, that one hundred years have scarcely passed away, since the first Missionaries of this SOCIETY

essayed, under every imaginable circumstance *Bishop of Calcutta's Reply.*
 of difficulty and discouragement, to plant their grain of mustard-seed in the Carnatic; when we look back to those apostolic Men with few resources, save what this SOCIETY supplied to them; without encouragement—without support; compelled to commit themselves, not to the casual hospitality, but to the systematic and bigoted inhospitality of the natives; seated in the street, because no house would receive them, acquiring a new and difficult language at the doors of the schools from the children tracing their letters on the sand; can we refrain not only from admiring the faith and patience of those eminent Saints, but from comparing their situation with the port which Christianity now assumes in the East, and indulging the hope that one century more, and the thousands of converts which our Missionaries already number, may be extended into a mighty multitude, who will look back with gratitude to this SOCIETY as the first dispenser of those sacred truths which will then be their guide and their consolation? What would have been the feelings of Swartz, (“clarum et venerabile nomen Gentibus;” to whom even the Heathen, whom he failed to convince, looked up as something more than mortal,) what would have been his feelings had he lived to witness Christianity in India *established* under the protection of the ruling power, by whom four-fifths of that vast continent is held in willing subjection? What, if he had seen her adorned

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and strengthened by that primitive and regular form of government which is so essential to her reception and stability among a race like our eastern fellow-subjects ! What forbids, I ask, that, when in one century our little one is become a thousand, in a century more that incipient desertion of the idol shrines, to which the learned Prelate so eloquently alluded, may have become total, and be succeeded by a resort of all ranks and ages to the altars of the Most High ; so that a Parochial Clergy may prosecute the work which the Missionary has begun, and “ the gleanings of Ephraim “ may be more than the vintage of Abiezer ? ”

There was one part of the Speech of my Right Reverend Friend, (if I may be allowed to call him so), which I cannot abstain in gratitude from noticing, though I confess, I allude to it with reluctance ;—I mean, the obliging manner in which he has been pleased to speak of me. There is no man who knows better than myself—and this, my Lord, is no time for dissembing—how little these praises are deserved. Yet even these praises, by God’s grace, I would hope may not be useless to me. They may teach me what manner of man the SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE desires as her agent and correspondent in India ; they may teach me what manner of man a Bishop of Calcutta ought to be—what manner of man Bishop Middleton was—and what manner of man, though at an humble distance, I must endeavour, by God’s help, to become.

I can only conclude by expressing, so far as *Bishop of Calcutta's* words can express, to your Grace, to the *Reply.* distinguished Prelates around you, and to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in general, my gratitude for the private and personal, as well as public kindness and countenance with which you have honoured me:—my gratitude, and that of the Indian Church, for the splendid bounty of which you have made me the dispenser;—my gratitude for the patience and indulgence with which you have now heard me;—my gratitude, above all, for those prayers which you have promised to offer up on my behalf to the throne of grace and mercy. Accept, in return, the blessing of a grateful heart;—accept the settled purpose of my mind to devote what little talent I possess, to the great cause in which all our hearts are engaged, and for which it is not our duty only, but our illustrious privilege to labour. Accept the hope, which I would fain express, that I shall not altogether disappoint your expectations, but that I shall learn and labour in the furtherance of that fabric of Christian wisdom, of which the superstructure was so happily commenced by him whose loss we deplore! I say the superstructure, not the foundation; for this latter praise the glorified spirit of my revered Predecessor would himself be the first to disclaim. As a wise master-builder he built on that which he found; but “other foundation
“ can no man lay”—nor did Bishop Middleton

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seek to lay any other than *that*—of which the first stone was laid in Golgotha, and the building was complete when the Son of God took his seat in glory on the right hand of His Father.

I again, my Lord Archbishop; with much real humility, request your blessing, and the prayers of the SOCIETY. It is, indeed, a high satisfaction for me to reflect that I go forth as their agent, and the promoter of their pious designs in the East: and if ever the time should arrive when I may be enabled to preach to the natives of India in their own language, I shall then aspire to the still higher distinction of being considered the Missionary of the SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.